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AUTHOR Bachrach, Judy
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ABSTRACT

This script of "National Town Meeting," a public affairs program on National Public Radio, contains a panel discussion on the future of public broadcasting, during which panel members also answer questions from the audience. The topics discussed include programming and program content, production costs, public participation, funding, the influence of sponsors (pressures from corporate funding), governmental control, and the applicability to public broadcasting of First and Fourteenth Amendment rights. (RL)

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NATIONAL TOWN MEETING
September 7, 1977

The Future of Public Broadcasting"

MODERATOR: Judy Bachrach
Washington POST

BACHRACH: Welcome to National Town Meeting. Today's topic is "The Future of Public Broadcasting." This year, as it happens, is a very significant one for public broadcasting. In November, the Public Broadcasting System, as we know it, will be ten years old, and we'd like to wish a very happy birthday to non-commercial TV and radio, especially radio, since a lot of NPR stations across the country happen to be carrying this very program of the National Town Meeting. Public Broadcasting, in both radio and TV operates under several different categories of licensees. State and local governments, state and private colleges, and other educational and non-profit organizations. But no matter how they're organized, they often bring us some very good programs, which for some odd reason we can't seem to find on the commercial networks.

The number of stations is growing each year, so that now I'm told we have 272 public TV stations, and 201 public radio stations. I guess the most essential thing about public broadcasting is that it belongs to us. Since it happens to belong to us, it is also up to us to see how it can be improved and made more responsive to our needs and desires. Which brings us to our first panelist, Ernest F.

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Hollings, of South Carolina, who is a Senator and therefore, also belongs to us. Two decades ago, he was governor of South Carolina, and he set up one of the very first state educational TV systems in the nation. These days, Senator Hollings is Chairman of the Commerce Subcommittee on Communications, which means he has jurisdiction over broadcasting issues. And he's also a member of the Appropriations Committee, which handles funds for public broadcasting. Senator Hollings.

HOLLINGS: Thank you very much, Miss Bachrach. I'm glad I belong -- I've spent the last thirty-day break from the Congress trying to give away the Panama Canal, and if you know my senior colleague, I don't belong anywhere.

With respect to Public Broadcasting commemorating now its tenth birthday -- it's really about twenty years old in my own state of South Carolina, where we first started the educational TV. I co-sponsored that particular bill, and as governor, appointed that first commission. And for the last ten years since the Congress and our own government has gotten into the act of public broadcasting, I think it's well that we hail the success that we now enjoy. As you'll see pointed out amongst the panelists, I think that's one thing we'll all agree on, it's recognized, it's worked, it's succeeding. And I think the main task now, Judy, in the next ten years, on the future of public broadcasting, is to

keep the public in public broadcasting. Namely, we will have pressures, and I think we should increase our percentages of contributions from the governmental end. But the how to maintain that perfect balance between funding on the one hand, and keeping public broadcasting for public control and influence on the other is going to be the major task.

BACHRACH: Thank you, Senator. Next we have Frank Mankiewicz. Mr. Mankiewicz became a public man back in '66, when he was Press Secretary to the late Senator Robert Kennedy. After that, he did the same for George McGovern. He's also co-authored a nationally syndicated column, and co-anchored a WTOP nightly newscast. And now he's the one-month-old, brand new President of National Public Radio. Frank.

MANKIEWICZ: Thank you. I suppose in a way, those of us at National Public Radio are just as much public property as Senator Hollings. The only difference is that we don't contend every day with Senator Thurmond. At least not on our home turf.

I am very pleased to participate in this discussion of the future of public broadcasting. Now that I'm the President of National Public Radio, I have an ideal answer to people who say, "Well, that's all very well, the criticisms you make of commercial television. But what should we

do about it?" And the answer, of course, now is very simple, which is "You turn it off and turn on public radio." I think public broadcasting -- when we talk about the future of public broadcasting, particularly in this anniversary year, and also a year in which we're looking for new directions, Congressional committees are looking at the Broadcasting Act for revision; they're looking at the Communications Act for revision; the new Carnegie Commission is coming up with a report on the proposed future for public broadcasting. Both television and radio are looking to new satellite interconnections which will vastly change the kinds of programming and the things that are done.

But we have to remember, I think that what public broadcasting does, both radio and television, is to hold up the yardstick to the commercial establishment and find it very short. Public broadcasting, it seems to me, illuminates our failures in private broadcasting, and as long as we do that, we're doing at least a major part of the job. Things like the American Short Story series, "Upstairs, Downstairs" -- all kinds of things we can think of on public television -- are better than anything of their kind produced on commercial television. All things considered, on public radio is the best information program on any medium, on anyone's air, anywhere, and demonstrates the kinds of things that can be done for a

relatively small investment in money and a very high investment in human energy and skill. So I think as long as we keep that function in mind, it'll be a useful discussion, and I hope a useful next ten years.

BACHRACH: Our thanks, Frank. Next, we have Chloe Aaron. Chloe Aaron was once a journalist, like all best people I know, and she wrote at that time mainly about TV and radio. In 1970, she became Director of the Public Media Program of the National Endowment for the Arts. In that post, she had the responsibility for the endowment funding of films, TV and radio. One year ago, she was elected Senior Vice President for Programming of the Public Broadcasting Service. This makes her, probably, the highest ranking woman exec in network television -- and good for you.

AARON: Thank you, Judy. I'd like to say it's a delight to see a full house here today, and I take it it's because everybody cares as much about public broadcasting as we do up here on the podium. I'd like to talk, even though it's about the future of broadcasting, first about the record of public television in the last year. It's been a terrific year.

We've had a series called "Dance in America," which is the only offering of dance on television in the country, now running for two years. We've had many series on music -- "Previn and the Pittsburgh", the Boston Symphony,

"Live From Lincoln Center". We've had a regular science series in "Nova". We have a regular nightly public affairs show, the "MacNeil-Lehrer Show" dealing with a single issue in the news. We have a regular fare of children's programming -- something you don't find on commercial television. I could go on and on and on.

We've also had an outstanding year in terms of awards. We've had five Peabody awards. One for "Visions", the only original drama series on television since 1955. We've had fifty-one nominations for Emmy awards, and one special citation for the "MacNeil-Lehrer Report". We've had a special citation from Action for Children's Television. I could go on and on with that.

The only thing that's amazing about this year is that we did it with the National Program Service that cost $66 million, compared to $1.4 billion spent by the networks. I'm amazed that we even go on the air. I think one of the biggest problems that we have facing us for the future is sufficient funding to do some of the projects that are now in the planning stages, but for which there is no money. To give you an example. If we were to produce three hours of original programming a night for a single six-month period, it would cost us $200 million. That's almost double the appropriation that we get currently from the Congress. We have a lot of work to do. We can be better. But we can't do it without some funding, which would at least put us in

some kind of a league, that if we're going to compete as an alternative, that will be there when somebody switches the dial. Thank you.

BACHRACH: Nick Johnson first became nationally known and heard when he began a seven-year term as a federal communications commissioner back in '66. Ever since that time, he's been a very vocal, and hard-nosed, and very smart critic of network abuses. His best known book on the subject is "How to Talk Back to Your Television Set" which tells you among other things, how to challenge a broadcasting license. Something we all should know. He's now Chairman of the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting. Nick.

JOHNSON: He's also now a grandfather and much less outspoken, but I do have some things to say about public broadcasting.

The National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting with which I'm now associated also began ten years ago. It began as the National Citizens Committee for Public Television, created to help bring the Corporation for Public Broadcasting into existence, and the NCCB has retained its interest in public broadcasting over the years, through today.

We do have a lot going on now, with a new Carnegie Commission inquiry, and House hearings going on this week, and the leadership of Senator Hollings on the Senate side, with his interest in these matters as well. I think it's worthwhile

to focus on why it is we created this thing in the first place. And that is because of an awareness that commercial broadcasting was largely failing us, as Frank Mankiewicz has said. And I think it's useful to address why, and the extent to which public broadcasting's been helpful in remedying that.

First of all, because commercial broadcasting has nothing to do with programming. It's a matter of selling an audience to the advertiser. This imposes limits on how creative you can be, and how controversial you can be with information programming. It excludes some people entirely from the process -- some artists, some minority group representatives in the country, like women and the elderly, and the youth, and the middle-aged, and the blue collar workers and the white collar workers and so on. And it ends up making the fare sort of bland and lacking in diversity. The problem, it seems to many of those of us who love public broadcasting as we do, and want to see it thrive, is that public broadcasting is very largely falling into precisely the same sort of traps.

Because of the economics of public broadcasting, stations tend to select programs for economic reasons. And those that are underwritten, i.e. sponsored, by corporations tend to be preferred over those that are not. So that you tend to have the same kind of corporate control of program

selection within the process that you have in the commercial side. And we think that's too bad.

We're also using a lot of material because it's simply cheap. We get it from abroad. It's not American produced. It's not serving the American creative community. Local stations want to appeal to those who contribute to the local station. And those tend to be upper class, white, college educated male, wealthy establishment folks in the community. And there is a larger public than that that needs to be served.

We don't still have the kind of range of programming we'd like to see, or employment practices and the rest of it.

There are solutions to this, and I'd like to just throw out three or four ideas quickly now, and then I'll be quiet for a while. Although Frank Mankeiwicz didn't mention it, as a matter of self-interest, I will as a matter of an independent observer, it seems to me that we are grossly disproportionately spending money on television rather than radio within the public broadcasting equation.

MANKIEWICZ: Right on!

JOHNSON: We do have it -- I thought at least I'd get your acquiescence in that, Frank. We do have it within our power to create the world's best radio service in any country. And we can do that with National Public Radio.

We need an AM and an FM outlet in each of the 200 largest markets, and we need more money for programming. There is no way that we can come close to doing that with television. We're not doing it now. We're not going to do it in the immediate future. But we could do it with radio. And it would seem to me we ought to first do it with radio. Cut back somewhat on television expenditures now, and then subsequently spend more on television.

We do, I agree with Chloe, we very much need more money in general for public broadcasting. The last time I looked, we were spending as a nation roughly one percent of what other civilized nations in the world spend on public broadcasting. Whether you figure it per capita, or in proportion to gross national product, or whatever.

I would like to see a distribution of the power in terms of selecting what programming gets on, and I have some specific suggestions I'll spell out later on that, if I get a question on it.

And finally, I would like to see ways of reducing the corporate impact on programming, and I think there are also ways in which that could be done, while retaining the money. Thank you.

BACHRACH: That was not two minutes, Nick. Alan Kriegsman is next. He's my friend and my colleague, and he happens to be the performing arts critic for one of the

classier newspapers in this town, otherwise known as the Washington POST. He has contributed articles on the arts for SATURDAY REVIEW, the REPORTER, and CULTURAL AFFAIRS, among many other publications. And last year, this guy got a Pulitzer Prize. Alan.

KRIEGSMAN: Thank you, Judy. I don't have very much to add to the already very impressive statements of my colleagues up here. But when I think of the future of public broadcasting, I think of three little words "the future", "public" and "broadcasting".

One of the troubles with public broadcasting in the past is that almost literally it has had no future. It exists only for the moment. This is because it has to run back to our Congress each year to assure whatever funding it gets. So it's not just a question of not enough money, but not enough leeway of time to plan sensibly and intelligently for the future.

So I think the first imperative for the future of public broadcasting is that there be a future. That there be long range financing for the whole system.

Secondly, I'll be reiterating what some of my partners up here have already said about the nature of public participation in broadcasting. I don't speak out of any great statistical knowledge about who's involved in putting together public television and controlling public

television, but it's certainly my strong impression that the powers that be in the public television world are not that different in composition from those in the commercial broadcasting world, and that the system really needs a far more aggressive affirmative action program, if you will, to see that particularly the local governing boards of the TV and radio systems in this country -- public TV and radio systems -- are really representative of all segments of our society. Not just the bankers, and the industrialists and the broadcasters, and the high powered intellectuals and educators. But all the other segments of our population that Nick so graphically pointed out.

Finally, I think that one of the problems with broadcasting in general, not just public broadcasting, is that very often it forgets that it's broadcasting. That is to say, it's not publishing, it's not a recording device, and it's not an electronic billboard. Radio and television are auditory and visual media of a very special kind, with their own very special needs and possibilities. But the range of those possibilities has only been scratched thus far in the history of these quite young media. And I think it's going to be up to the public system, because it should be able to, and can afford to take more risks, to be more adventurous, to be more daring than commercial broadcasting, to explore this kind of potential. And in that same connection,

I would like to say that the artists of this country, in every conceivable artistic medium, are a great untapped resource for the most part, as far as public broadcasting is concerned. In Europe, such names as Harold Pinter, and Carl Heinstuckhaus, and Pierre Boulez, Maurice Bejart, are the stock in trade of European broadcasts. They have been given almost carte blanche by their respective national broadcasting systems. We don't have anything comparable here, except with very, very rare exceptions, and now is the time, it seems to me, to begin to make that effort.

In sum, I think the public broadcasting, for its future, needs to envision a future and make it possible, to be truly public and to remember that it is broadcasting. Thank you.

BACHRACH: Okay. Now it's your turn to ask the questions. If you have a question, please remain in your seat, raise your hand, and our people who are handling the microphones will take you in turn. Please give your name, where you're from, and to whom you're addressing the question. And please keep your question to one minute. And I would like to ask the speakers to limit their answers to two minutes. And I'm told this is rigged. We already have one question on stage right from Mr. Sanderelli, of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Go to it.

SANDERELLI: We at the Corporation for Public

Broadcasting, have struggled with the same issues that were articulated in different perceptions by our panelists. And the principal issue for us is what we should be doing with our public trust. It agnonizes and divides and causes us much debate. We rarely have the opportunity to have a gaggle of chiefs and experts all gathered together to advise us. So here I am tc seek your advice. If I could ask Senator Hollings, knowing that in Washington all power flows from the Congress, which is from whence cometh our authority, what should we be at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting? And by that, I mean in the programming area, particularly. We have heard here today that diversity and public ownership are the hallmarks of our system. And some of us believe that sincerely. On the other hand, how do we achieve the success of public broadcasting, if we are too diverse and do not concentrate our limited resources on some priority? In other words, Senator, should we be looking at the priorities at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, like important blockbuster, big ticket, attention getting shows? Or should we be content to serve each small consituency in seriatum, or in pieces, and create a mosaic?

HOLLINGS: Well, it's very easy to implant my answer right in the middle of the two. The fact of the matter is that I think in answer to the effect, number one,

let's not start asking Congress how to program. I think that if I had a hearing today over the budget, or the operation of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and I had Senate colleagues who started telling you how to program, what to program, whether to diversify, or whether to congeal into important issues, and those kind of things, I'd try my best to cut him off, and I'd cut myself off from that answer, because that's the one thing we want to do, is leave that leeway to the corporation. But not trying to evade or avoid, I think I'd take my text from the last point made by Mr. Kriegsman, here, with respect to the creativity that exists and is untapped in this country. Yes, you had to go abroad for "Upstairs, Downstairs", due to a lack of funds. On the other hand, I hope we can increase those funds. As we increase them, I hope the effort will be increased not just to increase your activity over in the bargain basement in England, but on the contrary, search out this creativity and give it some kind of a forum over public broadcasting, so that the people will feel again more of a part which the regular commercial broadcasting will not afford. They can't experiment around. And I think then finally the answer would be to continue to experiment, both with the hodge-podge or mosaic, and with some of the large impact programs. I think the experimentation, the full coverage of Watergate -- I was a Senator up here -- and I thought I was following it, and trying to keep up with Sam Ervin at the luncheon

table in the back room. I found when I got home, my 89-year-old mother sat from late in the evening, on into the wee hours of the morning, and she told me more about Watergate than I could find out from my Senate colleagues. And I think that that was a very valuable service. Thank you.

BACHRACH: Okay. Thank you. We've got a questioner on stage left.

SMALL: My name is Walter B. Small, popularly known as "Snoopy, Jr." I know the distinguished Senator very well. I also know Mr. Johnson, and the Washington POST Is my favorite newspaper. End of patting them all on the back. Now to my quick question. Isn't the key word "public" and shouldn't the public be more included than it is in all broadcasting? In other words, public broadcasting should dominate the broadcasting scene, should it not? Not the other way around.

BACHRACH: Who are you addressing this to specifically?

SMALL: Well, to any one of the panel that wants to tackle it. Senator Hollings is getting a little bit nervous up there, but I don't think Nick's nervous. And so shall we say we'll let him do it.

JOHNSON: Well, sure. I mean, that's what the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting is all about. It's trying to make the point that broadcasting does belong

to the people. That was in the Communications Act that Senator Hollings keeps an eye on. And the FCC is supposed to be enforcing, but doesn't. The public needs to have opportunities to participate more effectively in commercial broadcasting. But especially in public broadcasting, because it is public and we'd like to think of it as more directly related to the people. One of the things that I skipped over briefly, notwithstanding my extension of the two-minute rule which I only just learned of was that it seemed to me if we could divide up who is making the programming choices, and give opportunity to get to the air with ideas to the following four groups: one, local stations to do local programming, which they originate. There is not very much of that now. Marvelous studio facilities available, virtually totally unused. Secondly, somewhere an elite national creator of programs that doesn't check with stations, doesn't check with producers, doesn't check with anybody else, just does the very best they can do, and puts it out on the air. Three, a consortium of the stations, which is what we tend to have now, picking whatever it is they want to produce amongst themselves, together. But fourth, and very important, some external group that tends to be dominated by producers and artists themselves, doing what they think is the best they can do, knowing that at least some of it will end up on the air, without having to

process itself through the bureaucracies of CPB-PBS, or a local station general management, or the Board of IDA. That would be one way in which we could diversify.

BACHRACH: Thank you, Nick. We've got a questioner.

MOONEY: I'm Joe Mooney, from Chevy Chase, Maryland. And my question is something on the same lines that Mr. Johnson just commented on. But if he wouldn't mind sort of another one in that general area, it's program content control, regardless of its major oil company or government administration, interested in promoting its vested interests. To Mr. Johnson or any other member of the panel.

JOHNSON: Well, let's spread it around. I'm happy to do it, I just don't want to...

BACHRACH: We have other questions written for other people. Go to it.

JOHNSON: Perhaps it would be wise to rephrase the question. My understanding of the question was that it was an expressed concern about program control by external sources, either expressed or implied, stated or not revealed. And what we intend to do about that. Do we see that as a problem. Is that a fair summary?

MOONEY: Essentially, yes, whether it's private interests or the public officials that are equally

interested in promoting their vested interests.

JOHNSON: And I think one of the best ways to -- I mean, we saw, during the Nixon years, for example, public broadcasting providing an hour or two of coverage of the Democratic National Convention, and then gavel-to-gavel coverage of the Republican National Convention. I mean that's just appalling. I mean, we simply cannot have that in public broadcasting. That kind of effort by the Nixon White House at that time to get public affairs programming off the air because a memo was written, "We don't think public broadcasting should be doing programming critical of the administration." There are those pressures. We have to know they exist. And I think the leadership of public broadcasting has to stand up to that and speak out on it. And say, "Look, the program I originally scheduled to put on the air tonight is not going to be shown because the President of the United States threatens to take away our funding if we put it on the air." That's the way they do it with the BBC, and they don't have much trouble with government over there. I think we need more of that kind of standing up. And then you've got the problem of the corporations. And I've spoken to that. We do have corporate control of virtually everything in our society, and public broadcasting's no exception. And I think there are ways to minimize that, and one would be to put corporate

credits at the beginning and end of the day, as we used to, instead of tying them in with specific programs.

BACHRACH: Frank. Now, you. Do you have anything to add to that?

MANKIEWICZ: No, I was just saying that I don't yield to Nick Johnson in any way in my willingness to reconstruct the question, so that it becomes an answerable one. I just -- I think that the concern is an obvious one, naturally. I don't think anyone here minimizes in any way the notion that (END OF SIDE #1)

SIDE #2:

MANKIEWICZ: ...whether it's in public broadcasting or anywhere else. And so, for that matter, of course, are powerful economic interests. But I think one underestimates the strength of public broadcasting, if one assumes that those pressures are going to be easily exercised. I don't think for a minute that anyone at National Public Radio, which I know about, and I see no reason to think that the situation is any different at the Public Broadcasting Service, at the Public Television, would yield for a minute to that sort of thing. I don't think the corporations control the programs they underwrite. I'm not even sure they want to. What they want to do is have attractive programs with which their name can be associated, for obvious public relations and ultimately commercial

reasons. But I think it's simply a measure of the integrity of the officials running the operation, as to whether it goes any further than that. And I can't believe that the way it's structured now, that it would. I can't believe that any oil company is going to come along and say, "Now, listen Mankiewicz, we'll put up some money for that news program, if you'll lay off the antitrust stuff that came up in the Senate this afternoon." Or anything even approaching that. Indeed, American companies are coming to understand that a more sophisticated audience is more inclined to credit their good intentions when the program may even lean over a little backward. I think it's an obvious concern. We have, after all, the example of Richard Nixon before us, and I assume we will for the rest of this century. Sometimes it seems as though we'll have him in person forever. But -- and that's a helpful thing to have. Richard Nixon, I think, in public broadcasting will become kind of like Guy Faulkes. I think we'll probably burn him in effigy every year at appropriation time. And a good thing, too. A good thing. But that's not to say that we have to be jittery and uncertain about every conceivable connection, either to government or to industry, in relation to underwriting.

JOHNSON: I think it's got to be pointed out...

BACHRACH: Nick. Please. We've got to move along. We've got a question for Chloe. What percentage of

public broadcasting funding, Chloe, goes to original programming production? Please compare that to administrative overhead.

AARON: Well, it's very hard to talk about administrative overhead. I can give you the figures for the total revenues for public television last year, were $361 million. That's all the expenses of maintaining the technical facilities, stations, that's everything. Of that, $141 million was spent on programming; $66 million of that was national programming. That's a rough breakdown. You should know that when we're talking about the $361 million for the total system, and this is just television, not radio, which has similar problems, as Nick has talked about, and Frank should. That's compared to $5.2 billion in revenues for commercial television. And if I could just take half a minute, Judy, to respond to something that Nick said -- slander, absolute slander -- about the elite, middle class audience in public television.

JOHNSON: No, I said the boards, not the audience.

AARON: I think you were talking also about the programming for the white middle class.

JOHNSON: Boards and employees. Yes.

AARON: Okay. Well, let me talk about employees for a second. Compared to commercial television,

again, last year, almost 100 percent of the gains in employment of minorities and women was made in public television, according to a survey done by the United Church of Christ. We have a long way to go, but I think that if these are where the only gains are being made, that everybody has the responsibility to look to commercial television as well. In terms of our audiences, I wanted to make the point that right now, 34 percent of our audiences ar skilled or semi-skilled workers -- roughly the same proportion in the population. Our black audience has grown 47 percent in the last year, now represents about 11 percent of the total population, which is roughly the same as the black population. And there's one thing that happened recently which I thought was very interesting. There was a black opinion poll taken in Chicago, and the question that was asked in the black community is, "If you only had one station to watch in Chicago, which would you watch?" And the answer was the local public television station.

BACHRACH: Thank you. We have a questioner stage right.

ADAMS: Anna Adams. Free lance writer. At present, Washington. Radio commercials are far less obnoxious than TV, at least you don't have to look at the people. But I would like to ask the whole panel if the authority of radio could not advise the advertisers to speak in natural

voices. Some of them scream and shout. Some talk so fast that you can't hear a word of what they say, or understand it. And some try to sing. And by the time they're through, nobody knows what they're talking about. And furthermore, some of the regular radio people, they could stand a little voice lessons themselves, and learn to speak better English. (APPLAUSE)

BACHRACH: I do believe that was a comment rather than a question. To Miss Aaron. Why is WETA so heavily dependent on the BBC, and other organizations' output?

AARON: I think the question might be broadened for not only WETA, but for the whole system. As I'm sure most of you know, we've come under a lot of criticism for importing programming from abroad. I thik the economics of the situation have to be looked at as a big part of it. Last year, we imported 123 hours of programming. Mostly from Great Britain. The cost to us was $3.3 million. If we had produced that programming, it would have cost us almost $37 million to produce. Another part of that is that not only we're buying programs, we're also selling programs. We've sold three times as many hours, over 300 hours, as we've acquired. The only place where there is a problem is in terms of the amount of money that we're able to get for our programs abroad. As I say, we spent about $3.3, and we took in about $2 million. So we do, in terms

of a balance of trade. But I think in terms of our commitment, our commitment is certainly to domestic production. As I mentioned before, we have an original drama series called "Visions". It's very expensive to produce drama. And the latest figures in the trades for "Washington Behind Closed Doors", which some of you might have seen last night is that it cost $620,000 an hour to produce. The average episode of "Masterpiece Theater" which we can acquire, is $30,000. And there is the problem. If we had more money, we would like to fund a project that's right now in a proposal stage with Harry Belafonte, doing eight programs using the best black talent in the country for next year. We don't know where we're going to get the money. And we've got a whole list of them.

BACHRACH: I have a question, actually. And that is that the subject of government control over TV and radio has come up and has been debated, but I -- and it's really to Mr. Mankiewicz, I suppose, in a sense, and to you, Chloe. The thing is that I don't think either of you dealt with it entirely to the point. Okay. Nixon really did have control over public TV, as Frank pointed out. And he really did control appropriations. And it is a fact that when state government controls local public television, as it does in Maryland, there is very little news about the state of Maryland brought to us by public TV, there's very little

investigative reporting. What are we going to really do about that? It is a factor. Nick brought it up, and it does seem to me to be the case. We're going to have to get out of government control in some way. (APPLAUSE)

MANKIEWICZ: Yes, but I think the significant thing to remember is that Richard Nixon did not control public television, or public radio. He tried. The only president, since we got into these matters who tried. But he didn't succeed. Indeed, not only did the system, the Public Television System, partially deflect that initiative, that very sinister initiative, but so did the Congress. Now there was damage done. He vetoed, as a president can do -- he vetoed an appropriation so that for a while there was no money at all in the continuing resolution, and so forth. But ultimately, for a variety of factors, including Watergate to be sure, he didn't get away with it. There was resistance, and it was at a time when the national resistance -- and I probably know this better than anyone else-- was at its lowest.

BACHRACH: What about the gavel-to-gavel coverage of the Republican Convention, and the half-hour coverage allotted the Democratic Convention on public TV.

MANKIEWICZ: I don't know about that. I find that hard to believe. I heard that today for the first time, and I'm not sure it's true. If you're talking about

the Convention of '72, is it the Convention of '72 you're talking about, or '76?

BACHRACH: Seventy-two.

MANKIEWICZ: Well, I was involved in the 1972 Democratic Convention, and it seems to me we had a lot of coverage. We didn't have gavel-to-gavel. But Vanocur and MacNeil chose not to do that. But they did a lot of in-depth stuff, it seemed to me. I don't know if there was gavel-to-gavel of the Republican Convention, as the manager of the Democratic candidate that year, I think I would have supported it. (LAUGHTER)

BACHRACH All right. We have a question on stage left from the audience.

WIBEL: My name is Stewart Wibel, I'm from Columbus, Ohio. I would like to preface my question by saying that, as an avid consumer of all things considered, and the MacNeil-Lehrer Report and Sesame Street, I'm profoundly grateful for those programming efforts and the many others on public television and radio. Beyond that, though, my question has to do with the relationship between government and its people. I think that right now we're suffering from a really serious problem about public confidence in government, in the aftermath of Watergate and many other governmental scandals, and I recently read an article in the NEW YORKER, saying that Congress feels that it's misunderstood,

and unappreciated, and that it's just not getting the kind of attention and love from the people that it should. Perhaps those of us on the other side of the fence out in the heartlands of Ohio, or anywhere else, if we understood a little bit more about what was going on in government, and could see that process, that we might appreciate your efforts more. And I'd like to ask Senator Hollings what he thinks the public mandate might be for the coverage of government activities by public television and public radio to a much greater extent than it is today?

HOLLINGS: The major reason, I think, for the lack of understanding of the goings on here in the national capitol was by way of the media on the one hand, and the Congress itself. We, in the Congress, for years, had closed door sessions. Only recently have we come into what we call "government in the sunshine", with open mark-ups of all our measures and everything else of that kind. On the other hand, the media has been looking just for that, namely a Watergate, or a scandal, or a headline, rather than the continuity of any kind of story of exactly what was going on. I think we're both remedying it in large measure. I think the public broadcasting can come in. I know we, tentatively, on an experimental basis, put lights in the chamber of the United States Senate, and I think by next year, you're going to have selected broadcasts of important debates, as well as

just the hearings. I think as these things develop, and as we get better coverage, namely by radio and TV, then you're going to get better coverage by press, and you're going to have better understanding.

BACHRACH: Thank you, Senator. We have a question from stage right.

ANDERSON: I'm Gillian Anderson, from Washington, D.C. And I'd like to address this question to all the panelists. Given the amount of money that is required for the production of television, how will -- in the future, how will the Public Broadcasting System insure that more attention and more funds are spent on radio? And would you advocate the separation of radio and television to make sure that happens?

BACHRACH: Chloe, take that first.

AARON: I would not advocate the separation of radio and television. And if I stress television, that's because that's my job, and it's not to say that radio is also not deserving of more funding. Frank could be much better than I at telling you about their needs, and what they could do if they had adequate levels of funding. I think we're in the business of public broadcasting, and I think that there are many areas where radio and television can work together to complement each other, sometimes jointly covering a story, sometimes simply in terms of simulcasts

of the Metroplitan Opera. I would hate to see them split, because I think we have many common purposes, and I would like to see us working together, rather than competing.

MANKIEWICZ: I just think the question is a very, very important one. We're talking -- I listened to the television spokesperson here, Chloe, talking about $66 million, and complaining about it. I tell you, Senator, if you would give public television $66 million, as you did last year, and just do it in cash, we at National Public Radio would hang around and live for two years off what fell to the floor! To give you a very serious answer, it is impossible, because of the cost of television production, ever to think that public television will do the total job that we all, I think in various ways, want it to do. Because you're talking about billions and billions of dollars just in production. But it is possible with radio, and it is possible for a very limited investment. For a tenth of what is spent in public television, we could have not an adequate public radio service, we could have a superb, excellent, public radio service to which we could point proudly before the entire world, and perhaps more important, to our own people. We could do the kind of information programming, the kind of stereo music programming, the kind of finding of original productions of American music, for example, around the country, of folk music, of classical music,

of dramatic music. We could produce drama on radio, which is not as expensive, nearly, as it is on television. We could have a return to radio comedy. We could do sports coverage of a kind that the commercial radio people can't or won't do. We can do children's programs. There are all kinds of possibilities. And it is within our grasp financially, for a rather reasonable amount of money. So your question is an important one. The American people, through their Congressmen and Senators have the capability of creating a superb, first class, permanent measuring stick in a radio system for this country. And I think we ought to seize that opportunity. (APPLAUSE)

BACHRACH: Question here for Mr. Kriegsman, as a journalist and critic, the gist of which says: Do you think it's fair for cultural programs on PBS -- Public Television -- to be underwritten by corporations? Or do you think that taints the quality of the programming?

KRIEGSMAN: Well, I don't think it necessarily taints the quality, but I do think inevitably in the quest for production money, the stations are led to where the money is. If it happens to be an oil company, or some other kind of company, the choice of what we're seeing is dictated by the availability of that money. So that is control is exerted no other way, it's a matter of what the oil company would like to see on TV. And that, certainly, has an effect on the

range and content of our viewing. I don't presently see any particular way around this, except in the kind of measures, perhaps, that Nick suggested -- kind of insulating the funding from the program content, perhaps by not permitting any single company to underwrite any single program. If you take away their power to give money to a particular program, I think you largely take away the attractiveness to the company to give any money at all, because they want to be associated with "Masterpiece Theater" or whatever it is, that has a glamorous image. But I think there are ways, perhaps, of spreading it around so that the image doesn't get affixed in such a way that the sponsor, so to speak, is making all these program choices for us.

BACHRACH: Well, that brings us to another question, which is for Nick, and that is: What ways? How do we get money to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, without underwriting? And do you have any solutions?

JOHNSON: Twenty seconds first on the last question. It's not just what's on. It's what's not on. Frank Mankiewicz does not get money from big corporations. Public television does. And whatever may be the impact of big corporations on the content of the dramatic programs, ask yourself, in a year when we had more concern about oil companies than perhaps any other year in our history, when

we should have been intelligently discussing whether or not to nationalize them, or have price control on their prices -- at least whether or not to enforce the antitrust laws against them -- I do not recall any long take-outs on public television forcefully advocating those positions. And I would suggest that that might have something to do -- nor on commercial broadcasting, really -- and I would suggest that it had something to do with the role of corporate underwriting. All right. Enough on that. There are a lot of other sources of money, and ways in which other countries fund their broadcasting systems. The most common is to have a set tax. You pay so much per year for having a television set in your home, and that money goes to the public broadcasting system. That's what's used in Japan, in England, in Sweden, in Germany, I think, and in Switzerland it's suggested, and so forth. You could have an excise tax on the sale of sets. You could have an apportioning of commercial broadcasting stations' taxes funneled into public broadcasting. I think we must do something to bring them into parity. If we're spending $5 billion on commercial broadcasting, I would contend we ought to be spending $5 billion on public broadcasting. I really think you've got to have a choice. In Britain, the BBC and commercial television battle head-to-head, and each one is somewhere between 40 and 60 percent of the audience. Which of those

percentages, they don't really care. But they want to split it more or less down the middle. I think that's what we ought to be doing, and we're not.

BACHRACH: Okay. Thank you. (APPLAUSE) We've got a question from stage left, from the audience.

KEIR: My name is Max Keir. I'm Chairman of the New South Wales Public Broadcasting Association. And if my foreignness doesn't disqualify me from asking a question, I hope my accent won't. I'd like to direct the question both to Nick Johnson and Frank Mankiewicz, if I may. And the question is: To what extent in this country of yours, do commercial licensees assist, ignore, or oppose public broadcasters, and what is the prognosis that you see for the future in this regard?

BACHRACH: Frank, take it.

MANKIEWICZ: To what extent do commercial broadcasters assist, ignore or impede public broadcasting? Not very much assistance. Rare impeding. And quite a bit of ignorance. We run into some problems where the success of public radio endangers, or is thought remotely to endanger the profits of commercial radio. That comes up now and then in the very good public radio stations in communities around the country that play very good first rate, what is called here "classical music". Sometimes, in apparent competition with commercial stations that do the same thing, the difference

being that if you want to listen to the music, you listen to the commercial station, and you get commercials. You listen to the public station, and you don't. And the commercial station, and a few even associations of commercial good music stations, have begun to raise a question of whether that might not be unfair competition, by taking public tax money, in a sense, and taking away their profitable dollars. There's been no showing yet that anybody has lost so much as ten cents because of it. That is to say, the commercial schedules are full. But that is one case where we are running into some impeding from the commercial broadcasting interests. Otherwise, they leave us pretty much alone. And I think there is a sense that there is a lot that we can share. We are joining, for example, with commercial stations now, through the NAB, and also through the Association of Commercial FM Stations, in support of legislation which would require the -- actually we're talking mostly about automobile radios -- to have an AM and FM capability, so that the automobile manufacturers would not see an FM radio a profit center, but rather a radio, an additional two or three dollars worth of equipment that can be put in a radio and enable automobiles to get FM radio, as well as AM. In other words, to do for radio what was done for television in terms of requiring the UHF capability. We're getting cooperation from commercial broadcasters in

that, and we expect to continue that very pleasant relationship.

BACHRACH: Thank you. Okay, we've got another questioner stage right.

NEGREAS: It's regretful that the members of the Public Television System are not here, because I would address this question to them. But in the meantime, I'll ask this question of Pancho Mankiewicz. My name is Domingo Negreas. When will public broadcasting really become public? In fact, Pancho, you well know that there are some sixteen to twenty million Hispanic Americans in this public, or publics, if you will -- these sixteen to twenty million Hispanic Americans have been alienated to that goodwill term called "minority" -- which really means black in the consciousness of most Americans -- and in this sea of white faces, I can see that it really only means that. At any rate, these sixteen to twenty million Hispanic Americans who have now been alienated to what has been loosely called, at NPR at times, as "WASP audience killers" status. This status by National Public Radio, as well as Public Broadcasting, finds us relegated to programming that has mostly subtitles. And I just want to find out from you what you feel might be in store for us, or this segment of our society, besides the safety of sameness.

BACHRACH: Would you like to ask that question

of TV, or radio, or both?

NEGREAS: I want to ask Pancho first, because I think he's got a friendly face. And then Chloe, maybe.

MANKIEWICZ: Well, Nick, we've talked about this before. I think radio has a remarkable opportunity -- public radio has a remarkable opportunity through the diversity, in the operation of the local stations in the system, to retain rich texture of America that often seems to be disappearing under the onslaught of particularly commercial television. We had a complaint down in the first row earlier this morning that speech seems to be flattening out. That everybody -- if I interpreted that question correctly -- one thing you were complaining about -- and if you weren't, you should have been -- is that regional accents, for example, are disappearing. All over the country, everyone will talk like Tom Snyder within forty or fifty years. Because children pick up their accents from their peers, and not from their parents, and their peers are on television, and they all have that flat, California non-accent. And it displeases Nick Reas incorrectly. What I'm saying is that radio, particularly when we begin satellite intercommunication, we'll be able to originate programs from around the country, from all of the rich threads that make up the tapestry of the country. We'll be able to retain not only regional programming, regional news, regional attitudes, regional

programs of all kinds, but also within that, the minority racial, national and other strains that need to be preserved. I think radio can perform a very significant influence in terms of preserving the differences in America, rather than blotting them out. Which I think, unfortunately, is the thing ... much more local and regional than television, again because of cost. So my answer, Nick, is that we hope for the best. We know there are sixteen, eighteen, twenty million, and we hope to devise techniques and methods, and of course, operate at all times with the spirit of mind that would encourage that participation.

BACHRACH: Well, I have the same question for television, and because television seems to exact a more severe standardized standard from all its people.

AARON: Well, one of the questions that came up at the very beginning is, and I think it was from Dal Senterelli, to Senator Hollings, is what should the balance be between specialized audience needs and mass audience needs. And joining in response to that, I would say that we should be doing both. And the specialized needs, obviously we start talking about the ethnic diversity of the United States, and there's a great ethnic diversity. We're talking about the Spanish-speaking population. The U.S. census puts it now at about 4 percent. And in an attempt to begin to serve that segment of the population, we've had last year an ongoing

series called "Realidades". For children, we had a series called "Villa Allegre", "Terras Golindas". We're running the same shows again this season. And again, starting in January, a new series for children called "Que Pasa?" I should add that that's just the National Program Service, and that at the local level, particularly in Denver, Texas, California, and Florida, there are many shows aimed at the Spanish-speaking audience that are done local production and not carried on the National Service.

BACHRACH: Thanks, Chloe. We've got one last question. It has to be short. The answer has to be short. Okay. Stage left.

CAMPBELL: My name is Carlos Campbell, and I live in Reston, Virginia. My question is directed at Nick Johnson. I can't really shorten this question. I think it's a very critical question. So I just have to ask you to excuse me. Every time the media is criticized, seemingly the First Amendment is used as the major defense. There also happens to be in the Constitution a Fourteenth Amendment, which says something about equal protection under the laws. In 1964, a Civil Rights Act was passed which said in effect there wasn't supposed to be any discrimination in federal programs. And yet, correct me if I'm wrong, it seems as though 95 to 98 percent of all of the executives controlling decision making in public television are white. It seems to be virtually an Ivory

Snow or Ivory Soap industry -- 99-44/100 percent white. Now....

BACHRACH: What's your question?

CAMPBELL: Just a second.

BACHRACH: Well, we're running out of time.

CAMPBELL: Okay. The point that I want to make is, if there is, in fact, a problem, if you recognize a problem, in terms of decision making, which certainly has the follow-on in terms of programming, do you see any legal -- valid legal recourse to correct these inequities? (END OF SIDE #2)

SIDE #3:

JOHNSON: As you probably know, when I came on the Federal Communications Commission in 1966, the broadcasting industry was at that time one of the most racist and sexist of all American industries. I think there has been some progress since then, all would have to concede. I think also they have still a long way to go, all would presumably concede. The Civil Rights Commission has only recently issued a report which I would commend to the attention of anybody who is seriously interested in pursuing the subject, where a lot of the current data is brought together, and some recommendations with regard to problems we still have in terms of programming and stereotyping, and in employment practices. A lot of criticism has been heaped on Public Broadcasting in this regard over recent years, and I think Chloe is right,

that they have been stung by it, and that they have begun to respond in some ways to that. You are also correct that the First Amendment is often dragged in by the tail, to try to defend the broadcasters in situations where it certainly doesn't belong, and I think that tends to cheapen the First Amendment as well as the broadcasters' argument.

BACHRACH: Thank you. Thank you, guests. Thank you, audience. Next week, at 10:30 the National Town Meeting will be held in the Eisenhower Theater. The topic will be "The Relevance of the Arts in a Technological Society." The panel will include John Brademas, a Congressman, Sarah Caldwell, an Artistic Director for the Opera Company of Boston, David Rockefeller, Jr., and the moderator will be Barbara Gamarekian, of the New York TIMES. And thanks, everybody.

ANNOUNCER: From Washington, D. C., National Public Radio has presented another program in our continuing series....